

This Memorial Day weekend, many Americans will go out to their local parks and lakes where they will enjoy some time away from work, time with their family and a good cook-out. Sadly, too many will do this without thinking about the meaning of Memorial Day.

That is why I think that as things like BBQs and musical festivals get much of our attention on this holiday weekend, we need to do more to encourage our families, friends, and neighbors to also take time to think about and thank all those who have served in order to protect the freedoms we enjoy today and every day in America.

Memorial Day needs to be more than just another holiday. It should be a day when we both reflect on and celebrate our country and all those who are serving or who served to defend it. I also believe that Memorial Day should remind us to do a better job of keeping the promises we have made to our military men and women in exchange for their commitment and service.

Doing more for the men and women who have volunteered to serve this great nation is why I fought for a seat on the House Veterans Affairs Committee (HVAC). I knew that serving on this Committee would be the best way for me to help our veterans. And while we still have a long way to go, I am proud of the progress we have made on improving the support and services we provide for them.

One very important victory on behalf of our veterans happened just a few days ago when the U.S. House overwhelmingly approved my proposal to eliminate what many call the Disabled Veteran Tax for over 100,000 veterans. The Disabled Veteran Tax unjustly forces disabled military retirees to give up one dollar of their pension for every dollar of disability pay. By curtailing this unfair tax, an additional 100,000 veterans will be able to receive both the retirement and disability benefits that are owed to them without being penalized.

Last week the House also [approved the Teague amendment](#) to the National Defense Authorization Act that allows veterans under the CHAMPVA healthcare system to have their children covered under that health insurance program up to the age of 26. I felt it was only right that veterans disabled as a result of their service get the same benefit available to civilians.

In addition, the Caregivers and Veterans Omnibus Health Services Act which was recently [signed into law](#) includes my proposal to help veterans by providing financial assistance to caregivers of recent veterans who provide transportation to medical appointments. This bill helps address some of the issues experienced by veterans who have to drive long distances for appointments -- a problem that so many veterans and veteran families in southern New Mexico have been dealing with on their own for too many years.

We can never truly repay the debt that we owe to those who made the ultimate sacrifice for our country, but we should always remember their sacrifices and honor their memory by doing more to support the WWII, Korean, Vietnam, Gulf War, and Global War on Terrorism veterans that are still with us.

###